

# NORTHERN NUMBERS

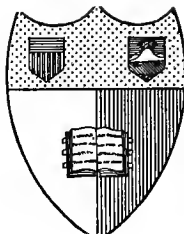
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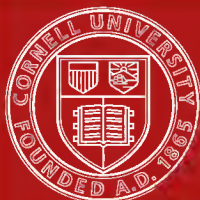
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# NORTHERN NUMBERS



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BEING  
REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS  
FROM CERTAIN LIVING  
SCOTTISH POETS

EDITED BY C. M. GRIEVE

*SECOND SERIES*

T. N. FOULIS  
EDINBURGH & LONDON

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## FOREWORD

**E**LEVEN contributors were represented in the First Series of *Northern Numbers*, published in November 1920. Seven of these contribute again. Contributors for the first time are: General Sir Ian Hamilton, Sir Ronald Ross, the Rev. Lauchlan Maclean Watt, D.D., Dr Charles Murray, Professor Alexander Gray, Mrs Lindsay Carnegie of Annesley, Miss Agnes Falconer, Miss Isobel W. Hutchison, Miss Mary Symon and Messrs Lewis Spence and William Ogilvie—the last-mentioned not to be confused with our older friend and contributor, Mr Will H. Ogilvie. In several cases what are held by many to be the best poems of their authors are not included here (*e.g.* Lauchlan Maclean Watt's "Grey Mother," which already appears in no fewer than seventeen anthologies), preference being given to less well-known poems and, more particularly, to current work, and work not hitherto published in volume form.

These representative selections have for the most part been chosen by the contributors themselves—who, it may be remarked, now represent practically every district in Scotland, "including London."

I have to express my indebtedness to many editors and publishers for permission to include various poems in this volume.

C. M. G.



# JOHN BUCHAN

THE GIPSY'S SONG TO THE LADY CASSILIS—THE WISE  
YEARS—WOOD MAGIC



# THE GIPSY'S SONG TO THE LADY CASSILIS

*"Whereupon the Faas, coming down from the Gates of Galloway, did so bewitch my lady that she forgot husband and kin, and followed the tinkler's piping."*—CHAP BOOK OF THE RAID OF CASSILIS.

THE door is open to the wall,  
The air is bright and free;  
Adown the stair, across the hall,  
And then—the world and me;  
The bare grey bent, the running stream,  
The fire beside the shore;  
And we will bid the hearth farewell,  
And never seek it more,  
My love,  
And never seek it more.

And you shall wear no silken gown,  
No maid shall bind your hair;  
The yellow broom shall be your gem,  
Your braid the heather rare.  
Athwart the moor, adown the hill,  
Across the world away,  
The path is long for happy hearts  
That sing to greet the day,  
My love,  
That sing to greet the day.

When morning cleaves the eastern grey,  
And the lone hills are red;  
When sunsets light the evening way  
And birds are quieted;  
In autumn noon and springtide dawn,  
By hill and dale and sea,  
The world shall sing its ancient song  
Of hope and joy for thee,  
My love,  
Of hope and joy for thee.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

And at the last no solemn stole  
    Shall on thy breast be laid;  
No mumbling priest shall speed thy soul,  
    No charnel-vault thee shade.  
But by the shadowed hazel copse,  
    Aneath the greenwood tree,  
Where airs are soft and waters sing,  
    Thou'lt ever sleep by me,  
                                My love,  
    Thou'lt ever sleep by me.



# THE WISE YEARS

*the monk, Lapidarius, in meditation*

*from "The Moon Endureth"*

I, LAPIDARIUS, priest of the Most High  
(Called, ere Christ sought me, John of Dinlay-burn),  
Now in this shadowy twilight of my days  
Give laud and make confession. Yester-eve  
I cast lots in the Scriptures, for 'tis right,  
As Austin teaches, thus to question God.  
Twofold the answer: first I found the text,  
"The hour is nigh," a token clear that soon  
I must put off these tattered mortal weeds  
And don the immortal raiment of the blest.  
The second was the Psalm, that "to the just  
Peace shall be granted while the moon endures."  
A fitting benediction, quoth my soul;  
For I have ever loved the moon and sought  
The gentle love that dwelleth in her beams.

Here, in this moorland cell, long years I strove  
To pierce the veil that parteth Heaven from man.  
By fasts and vigils I wore thin the robe,  
The fleshly robe that clogs the soul; in prayer  
I from the body soared among the stars  
And held high converse with the cherubim,  
I moved in ecstasy, and all the land  
Spake of my sainthood; people thronged from far  
To gaze upon the man who walked with God.  
Ah, little knew they! In my heart I wept,  
For God was ever distant. Not with Him  
I communed, but with fancies self-begot,  
Half of sick brain and half of fevered flesh.  
And then one eve—'twas at the Lammas-tide  
When every twilight is a taste of Heaven,  
While half-distraught I laboured, sudden came  
The light that shone on Paul; I caught my breath,  
Felt on my forehead the cool hand of God,

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

And heard His holy accents in my ear:  
"Why troublest thou thyself to mount to Me  
When I am with thee always? Love My world,  
The good green earth I gave thee for thy joy."  
Then through the rushes flowered the rose of eve,  
And I went forth into the dewy air,  
And made my first communion with God's world.

The robe of flesh wears thin, and with the years  
God shines through all things. Time and Death are not,  
Nor Change, but all endures even as a tree  
Bears in its secular trunk the rings of youth.  
I walk by stream and hill, at even and dawn,  
In noontide's height, in the first joy of spring,  
Through the warm hours of summer, in the ripe  
Soft fall of autumn, when the winter's spell  
Has stilled the earth to sleep; and as I go  
The dear unseen companions walk with me;  
The birds and beasts attend me, and their speech,  
Wise as the hills, hath opened mysteries.  
I hold high fellowship with souls long dead  
And souls unborn, for I am one with life,  
One with the earth and almost one with God.  
They name me saint no more. The Abbot scowls,  
The brethren flee me, and the country folk  
Call me the devil's minion. Soon, belike—  
For God may will I reach Him through the fire—  
They seek to burn me as a brand of hell.  
All men have shunned me, but the children come  
Stealthily on a holy day with flowers  
Or autumn berries; from the hazel shade  
They whisper, "Brother John, come play with us  
And tell us stories of your fairy friends."  
They know, whose hearts are pure, that mine is kind,  
And erreth not in loving all God made.  
They shall have comfort while the moon endures.

## JOHN BUCHAN

*The hour is nigh.* Behind the wattled strip  
Which screens my pallet, lo! the first grey light  
Creeps timorous as a fawn. My limbs are moved  
To a strange exaltation. . . . Soon the sun  
Will steep the moorlands in a holier dawn,  
And my thin veil of sense will fade and fall.  
I shall be one with Him, and hear His speech,  
As friend to friend, and see Him face to face.  
He findeth God who finds the earth He made . . .  
The Green Glen waits the morning, and I go.

## WOOD MAGIC

I WILL walk warily in the wise woods on the fringes of  
eventide,  
For the covert is full of noises and the stir of nameless  
things.

I have seen in the dusk of the beeches the shapes of the  
lords that ride,

And down in the marish hollow I have heard the lady  
who sings.

And once in an April gloaming I met a maid on the sward,  
All marble-white and gleaming and tender and wild of  
eye—

I, Jehan, the hunter, who speak, am a grown man, middling  
hard,

But I dreamt a month of the maid, and wept I knew not  
why.

Down by the edge of the firs, in a coppice of heath and  
vine,

Is an old moss-grown altar, shaded by brier and bloom.  
Denys, the priest, hath told me 'twas the lord Apollo's  
shrine

In the days ere Christ came down from God to the  
Virgin's womb.

I never go past but I doff my cap and avert my eyes—  
(Were Denys to catch me I trow I'd do penance for half-  
a-year)—

But once I saw a flame there and the smoke of a sacrifice,  
And a voice spake out of the thicket that froze my soul  
with fear.

Wherefore to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,  
Mary the Blessed Mother and the kindly Saints as well,  
I will give glory and praise, and them I cherish the most,  
For they have the keys of Heaven, and save the soul from  
Hell.

## JOHN BUCHAN

But likewise I will spare for the lord Apollo a grace,  
And a bow for the lady Venus—as a friend but not as a  
thrall.

'Tis true they are out of Heaven, but some day they may  
win the place;

For gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them  
all.



# AGNES LINDSAY CARNEGIE

TO SIR HARRY LAUDER





## TO SIR HARRY LAUDER

Written in January 1917

**B**ECAUSE we flock to hear you in your glory,  
And "laughter holding both her sides" is thine,  
Shall we not mourn that now your tragic story  
Is marred and blotted in the last best line?  
"The only son" in whom we know was centred  
The love, the care, the work of many years,  
He in his happy youth has greatly ventured,  
For him—your soldier son—there are no fears!  
Oh, King of Doric Laughter, take our sorrow—  
Accept the sympathy that knows like pain,  
And from the heart of Scotland may you borrow  
The pride, the confidence which keeps us sane.



AGNES S. FALCONER

THE FOUR CUPS



## THE FOUR CUPS

FOUR flagons grace the board of life,  
With wondrous wines they brim;  
Who sips thereof—who drinketh deep—  
Shall know his senses swim.  
And Two are made of beaten gold  
And Two of silver dim.

Not every guest shall kiss the Cup  
That holds the Wine of Fame;  
The Master calls his chosen souls  
And singles them by name.  
There is little sweetness in the wine,  
But it thrills like living flame.

The golden Cup of Love runs o'er  
With mingled Sweet and Fire—  
Fair fancies hover round the brim  
And raptured dreams inspire;—  
Some may but sip; some must forgo;  
Some drink at their desire.

But Sorrow's silver chalice holds  
A chill and dreary wine—  
Oh, well for those who blend with this  
A dearer draught divine,  
Yet neither Love nor Fame may quench  
Its taste of tears like brine.

Who drinks too deep of Sorrow's wine  
May henceforth only know  
The weariness and thirst that wait  
The Fourth Cup's coming slow,  
That every guest must drain at last  
Ere he hath leave to go.

That Cup of Death—who drinks thereof  
Forgets both Love and Fame,

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

Who drinks thereof forgets the smart  
That with his Sorrow came;—  
No guest so favoured—none so low  
But he shall drink the same.

I see, beneath the circled lights  
That o'er the banquet burn,  
That pallid-gleaming flagon pass  
Which none escape nor spurn;—  
The Feast's high Master sends it round  
And all must drink in turn.

---

# JOHN FERGUSON

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS—AT A PAWNBROKER'S  
WINDOW — THE PROPERTY MAN — CHRIST AT  
"ALADDIN"—AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM—THE  
STAR LEAD





## THE WARDROBE MISTRESS

S ADDENED by dreams of what she might have been,  
Sick with the thought of what she is to-day,  
She droops, a little woman, pinched and grey,  
Within the shadow of a painted scene;  
Still lingers on her weary face the sheen  
Of make-believe; the cruel crow's-feet stray  
Beneath her faded eyes, and mute dismay  
Lurks in her timid and pathetic mien.

Echoes of bygone triumphs wake her breast—  
The nights of tinselled bliss, the dizzy whirl,  
The sparkling gauds, the limelight and the band—  
Now with a needle in her work-worn hand,  
She potters round the wings, all drably drest,  
Stitching the trappings of some thoughtless girl.

## AT A PAWNBROKER'S WINDOW

**L**OITERING along the crowded thoroughfare  
I paused before a window yesternight  
Whose glittering range of gold, all gleaming bright,  
The sorrows of a thousand hearts laid bare;  
The trinket and the pledge of love were there,  
The wedding ring that sealed Love's dear delight,  
The little cross with simple gems bedight,  
The locket that had held a mother's hair.

O, eloquent of many a tragedy,  
O, garish window in the sombre street,  
Symbol of Sorrow's victory complete,  
Telling of hapless lives in ruins that lie,  
While ceaseless throngs, unheeding, pass thee by  
Their own bright hopes pursuing with eager feet.

## THE PROPERTY MAN

UNBILLED, unnamed, he never gets a "hand,"  
He never "takes the curtain," though he plays  
The augustest part of all, and nightly sways  
A rod more potent than a wizard's wand;  
Cities as magic-fair as Samarcand,  
He summons forth to front the footlights' blaze;  
His Jove-like nod the hurricane obeys,  
And the long thunder leaps at his command.

Custodian of treasure without end,  
Impartial arbiter of woe and weal,  
Bidding the joy-bells chime, the requiem toll . . .  
He doffs his sceptre when the "tabs" descend,  
And hurries homeward to a midnight meal—  
A mug of porter and a sausage-roll.

## CHRIST AT "ALADDIN"

THE house is crammed, the overture is done;  
The curtain rises o'er the lowered lights;  
Across the stage swing troops of tinselled sprites,  
And round and round the comic policemen run:  
The Widow Twankey dances with her son  
The debonair Aladdin, brave in tights;  
Within the magic cave what dazzling sights,  
And in the enchanted palace, oh, what fun!

The childish flotsam of the neighbouring streets,  
Long breathless wondering, from the topmost seats  
Sends sudden laughter rippling through the air;  
O marred yet merry little ones, I know,  
The Christ Who smiled on children long ago,  
Himself hath entered by the gallery stair.

## AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM

**T**HEY call Him the Good Shepherd and the Lamb,  
The Rose, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel;  
And yet, half-vaunting, of His vengeance tell  
On all who traffic in deceit or sham;  
They boast much knowledge of the dread I AM,  
And babble of a Book whose pages swell  
With record of men's faults since Adam fell—  
Nay, He inscribeth every muttered "Damn."

They have not seen the Lord who tell such things,  
They have not touched His garment in the throng,  
The foolish folk who know not what they say . . .  
No book of doom is hid beneath His wings,  
And when men stumble in blind paths of wrong  
How often doth He look the other way!

## THE STAR LEAD

**T**HE theatre is crowded, and the air  
Heavy with perspiration, thick with smoke;  
The hushful stage is held by augurous folk,  
Momentous and dread things are happening there:  
The hired assassin leaves his hidden lair,  
The hero writhes beneath the tyrant's yoke,  
The unctuous villain stalks in inky cloak,  
And the blanched heroine wrings her hands in prayer.

The heroine is saved, the villain dies,  
The hired assassin meets a gory fate,  
Virtue sits thronèd, and the gods rejoice:  
The hero broadens his phylacteries,  
Ruffling with stagey swagger in his gait,  
And twenty years of touring in his voice.

# MABEL CHRISTIAN FORBES

THE ROSELEAF AND THE RECLUSE (SAID SHE)—  
THE FOLD





## THE ROSELEAF AND THE RECLUSE (SAID SHE)

"I AM  
Wor-ship,"  
He said.

"And—what do you want?"

Askt she.

"Nothing—except To Be."

"I am Love,"

He said to her.

She—

"Do you still want

Nothing?"

She said.

"Nay—all!

But I ask for

Nothing,"

Said he.

*"Come to me, love!" he sang.*

*"I am bold with desire," sang he.*

*"There is nothing I fear,*

*—There is nothing to fear!"*

*Sang he.*

*"Say me not nay!" he cried.*

*"I suffer, and knowing how poor I am—*

*And when you answer me, cool and far,*

*Cool and far—*

*My shame and my pain are bitter to bear,*

*Are hard to bear.*

*And strange . . . and shy . . . that you come not nigh——"*

"What do you lack?" quoth she—

"Nothing—except to be?"

"I lack for nothing," he said:

"You are Peace and Bidding and Blessing to me.

Be as you are—No more!"

Said he.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

"O, I am so little," she cried.

—"A shower of tears on a desert-land,

A roseleaf crumpled to shade a world,

A wallet of coppers to ransom a king,

A quivering note in a scorning heaven—

And you say, 'Be content—be content' . . .

I would liefer not be, not be."

# THE FOLD

Written to a sheep-dog

WEARILY the mist trails low, and white  
Over the wet sky.  
You can hear the burns are sucking at  
Their courses.

Weariedly the dog, and then the shepherd  
Round the corner,  
Drag crook and tail.

The sheep are like poor wraiths.  
Soon the fire crackles in the cot hid in the shoulder  
Of the hill, and warm, wedged fleeces snuggle in the fold.  
Where is then the sheep-dog? where his panting? . . .

"He pants no longer."

Does his spirit wander up among the mountain-sides to  
drink the sucking runlets?

"He climbs no more; scours not now or ever the craggy  
sheep tracks."

*Where* is now his spirit? In the cot beside his master?

"No. I see his spirit now. It lies  
On the green field  
Where the sheep  
Are folded—  
*It is the fold.*"



# ALEXANDER GRAY

ON COMPLETING A TASK—DRAWING HOUSES—  
BABYLON IN RETROSPECT



## ON COMPLETING A TASK

*from the "English Review"*

I HAVE been long a bondsman; I have spent  
The days in loveless labour, and have grudged  
The hours of slumber. I have toiled and drudged  
To reach the goal on which my eyes were bent.  
This year I have not heard the yorling sing,  
Nor seen the ploughed land clothe itself in green,  
Nor cornfields turning yellow. All unseen  
Autumn has followed summer, summer spring.

I said, when this is ended I will seek  
The golden fields where reapers bind the sheaves,  
And hear the bleating of the moorland sheep.  
And now,—my eyes are dim, my hands are weak;  
I do not ask to see the drifting leaves—  
Grant me, O Lord, Thy gift, the gift of sleep.

# DRAWING HOUSES

*hitherto unpublished*

PAPER and pencil in his hand  
He clambers on my knee.  
A big house, a huge house,  
Is what he wants to see.

And first I draw King George's house,  
With windows up and down.  
It's the biggest house, the hugest house,  
You'll find in London town.

And then I draw the Tower house,  
Its walls are gaunt and bare.  
It's a bad house, a sad house,  
For those who enter there.

And many another gallant house  
I draw for little John,  
With plum-trees and apple-trees  
And lamp-posts on the lawn.

But always ere the game is done  
One house comes back to me:  
There's a little house, a singing stream  
And a lonely rowan-tree.

The little rascal laughs aloud,  
And asks me what I mean  
By the little house, the lonely tree  
And the babbling stream between.

Jerusalem, may my hand rot  
If I cease to remember thee!  
O my ain hoose, my ain burn,  
My bonny rowan-tree!



## BABYLON IN RETROSPECT

**I** MIGHT dae waur than bide here a' my days,  
Whaur a' thing's aye, year in year oot, the same;  
Amang kent fowk, trailin' upon kent braes,  
I micht dae waur than settle doon at hame.

To live content wi' little, kennin' weel  
That this world's gear is coft wi' muckle care;  
To hae a change o' claes, a puckle meal,  
And peace o' mind—what needs a body mair?

To howk the grund whaur ance my forbears swat,  
To see the kirkyaird whaur some day I'll rest;  
Wha kens but mebbe some sic wey as that  
Wad gar me trow that a' thing's for the best?

It scunners me to think I'll hae to face  
Ance mair the senseless trokes I've left ahent;  
For in that clorty, smeeky, godless place  
There's naething that can gie a man content.

Wae's me to think on't, but your weary feet  
May wander up and doon a hail year through,  
And never in the towmond will you meet  
A chield that's sib to ane that's sib to you.



# C. M. GRIEVE

EDINBURGH—PLAYMATES—SONNETS OF THE  
HIGHLAND HILLS (COURAGE, HEAVEN, RIVALS,  
THE WIND-BAGS, VALEDICTORY)—THE FOOL—  
THE LAST SONG



# EDINBURGH

MIDNIGHT

**G**LASGOW is null,  
Its suburbs shadows  
And the Clyde a cloud.

Dundee is dust  
And Aberdeen a shell.

But Edinburgh is a mad god's dream,  
Fitful and dark,  
Unseizable in Leith  
And wildered by the Forth,  
But irresistibly at last  
Cleaving to sombre heights  
Of passionate imagining  
Till stonily,  
From soaring battlements,  
Earth eyes Eternity.

## PLAYMATES

O THOU upon whose breasts  
The pale skies dangle  
Show me your heart!

Children we were together  
And playmates long ago.

Do you remember  
That funny old spare star  
On which we kept pet nations?

The frantic little things!  
But they were always fighting  
And killed each other out at last.

All except America,  
Poor old America!  
Which went wrong in the head!  
You took pity on it  
And killed it too.

You were merciful then.

O Thou upon whose breasts  
The pale skies dangle  
Show me your heart!

# SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

## I

### COURAGE

SINCE when I see a mountain my own heart  
Is lifted mightily upon the dawn  
And I am inoppugnably updrawn  
And in the centuries take a founded part,  
Let me recount my courage in the world  
—With Slioch, and Ben Airidh a Char,\* and Ben Lair,  
Marscodh's twin peaks, and to the westward there  
The javelins of Scur na Gillean hurled!

I name no more. Such are the moods I lift  
Heedless into the troubled skies of Time,  
Whence, see, how deviously slide and shift,  
Gleaming, the songs I gather for my own  
—And loose, in ecstasy, that so their rhyme  
May rounded be by faithful seas unknown.

\* Pronounced "Ben-achar."

# SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

## II

### HEAVEN

**I**F, scaling skies precipitous, we reach  
The gates we deem should give on Paradise  
And pick their locks and find a void of skies  
—A skyey void again!—and still have speech:  
If thought be but a cranny in the wall  
Where through we briefly glimpse the dazzling world  
And straight to endless dooms again are hurled  
And blindly borne away, and that is all—

Let us give praise that unto us is given  
To see on Blaven's and on Marsco's heads  
The wild stars spill (and know it for our Heaven,  
Seeking no cranny but the Scalpay view),  
The timeless magic of their greens and reds,  
Nor further climb in search of wonders new.



# SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

## III

### RIVALS

TO M. G.

**T**HE multitudinous and various hills  
Court thee. Shyly at dawn attending thee  
Or bending in the twilight tenderly  
They vie to pleasure thee, and my heart fills  
(In silence there beyond each dawn whereon  
Your eyes with passion seize, beyond each night  
That thrills you with enchantment and delight)  
With mingled pride, and grief for dreams foregone.

You do not greet me as you welcome these,  
Though kind your smile and intimate your nod,  
I know too well with what bright mysteries  
Your eyes on Briareach turn: and how you run  
To where Schiehallion standing like a god  
Turns me to dust and ashes in the sun!

# SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

## IV

### THE WIND-BAGS

**R**AIN-BEATEN stones: great tussocks of dead  
grass  
And stagnant waters throwing leaden lights  
To leaden skies: a rough-maned wind that bites  
With aimless violence at the clouds that pass,  
Roaring, black-jowled, and bull-like in the void,  
And I, in wild and boundless consciousness,  
A brooding chaos, feel within me press  
The corpse of Time, aborted, cold, negroid.

Aimless lightnings play intermittently,  
Diffuse, vacant, dully, athwart the stones,  
Involuntary thunders slip from me  
And growl, inconsequently, hither, thither  
—And now converse, see-saws of sighs and groans,  
Oblivion and Eternity together!

GILDERMORIE,  
*November 1920.*

# SONNETS OF THE HIGHLAND HILLS

v

## VALEDICTORY\*

PARNASSUS and Schiehallion are one,  
But one hill is that any life may climb,  
One Pisgah from whose summit lies sublime  
The land of Promise in the morning sun.  
But all bones whiten ere the goal is won.  
Parnassus or Schiehallion—each song  
The grateful echoes for a time prolong,  
But silence falls before the song is done.

Schiehallion and Calvary are one.  
All men at last hang broken on the Cross,  
Calling to One who gives a blackening sun.  
There is one hill up which each soul is thrust  
Ere all is levelled in eternal loss,  
The peaks and plains are one. The end is dust.

\* These five Sonnets are taken from a privately-circulated sequence of fifty

## THE FOOL

**H**E said that he was God.  
“We are well met,” I cried,  
“I’ve always hoped I should  
Meet God before I died!”

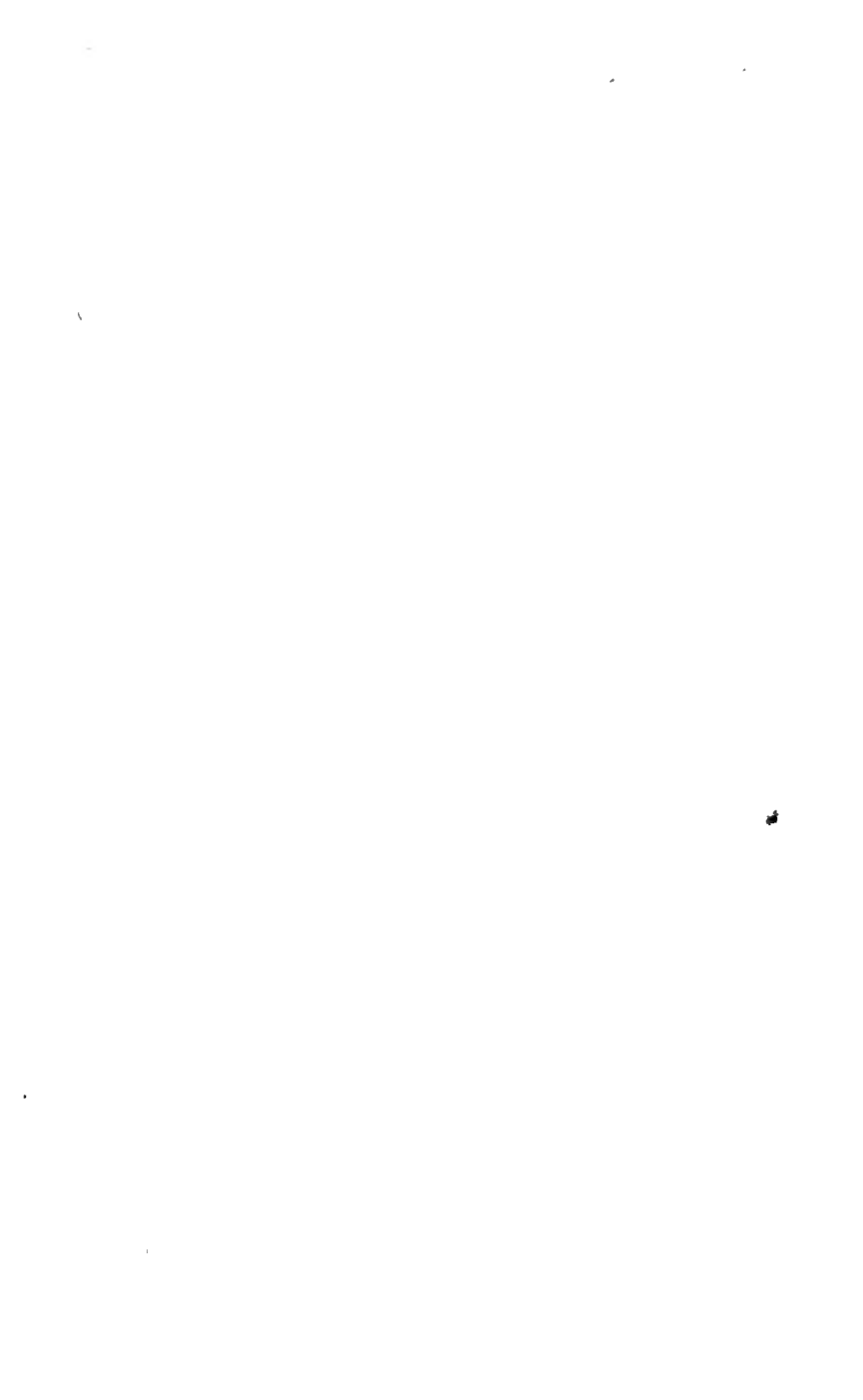
I slew him then and cast  
His corpse into a pool  
—But how I wish he had  
Indeed been God, the fool!

## THE LAST SONG

**T**HE heavens are lying like wreaths  
Of dead flowers breaking to dust  
Round the broken column of Time.

Like a fitful wind and a cold  
That rustles the withered stars  
And the wisps of space is my rhyme,

Like a fitful wind and a cold  
That whistles awhile and fails  
Round the broken column of Time.



IAN HAMILTON

GORDON—A NIGHT AT HAFTON





# GORDON

*from the "English Review"*

WHERE the Blue Nile into the White Nile slips;  
Where the long betrothed at last link hands;  
The ghosts of the dead men move their lips  
And the sigh of the wind o'er the desert sands  
Bears the whispered name—Charles Gordon.

The murmur springs from the monstrous grave  
Of the thrice ten thousand cruelly slain,  
But the blue wave sobs to the milky wave,  
"Once I bore on my bosom a crimson stain  
From the heart of their god—Charles Gordon."

Yet ever the more, through all the land,  
From Bahr el Ghazl to Kordofan,  
That name is a spell to strengthen our hand—  
As the sign of the Cross, that name of a Man—  
Of the Cross they fastened our Lord on.

Kitchener conquered and Wingate reigns:  
No better soldiers; great their glory:  
The moth and the rust shall dispute their gains  
While there, like a lantern of God, shines the story  
Of the warrior who buckled no sword on.

Look, where our flag, like a restless flame,  
Proclaims afar the end of fear;  
Where would it be but for deeds of fame;  
But for the man who stood under it—here!  
As the Dervishes stormed—Charles Gordon?

From the steps his pinnacle kept signalling, *Come—  
Our steam is up—the Nile flows red—  
Closer each throb of the Dervish drum—  
Khartoum is lost—your men are dead;  
And—life is sweet, Charles Gordon!*

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

When the thirsty spears set his spirit free,  
He met them, we know, as friend meets friend:  
Sharp keys were they to Eternity,  
But he has it—you swear—death was never the end  
Of the leader we loved—Charles Gordon!

KHARTOUM,

*January 1913.*

## A NIGHT AT HAFTON

SNUGLY tucked behind the curtains,  
Very quiet, quite forgotten,  
Reading Sanford's life and Merton's  
While my Aunts plied silk or cotton;  
Enormous spread each crinoline,  
Flounce upon flounce of bombasine.

Next the fire sat my Granny;  
Black her dress yet rich and lustrous:  
As I eyed her through a cranny,  
Click, click, click, she knit industrious:  
"She's forty-five, if she's a day,"  
So did I once hear Henriette say.

Joys like butterflies have wings—  
Hardly settled ere they flutter—  
So my book's leaves (crinkly things)  
Rustled to my paper-cutter.  
Though still I kept—as squats a hare  
When hounds are out for toothsome fare.

*What was that? Well I declare,  
Little Ian! It's past eleven!  
Wide-awake and reading there?  
At your age I slept at seven.  
Kiss your Aunts—trot off upstairs—  
Take care you don't forget your prayers.*

So at eerie dead of night  
I must quit the cheery room,  
Crackling fire and laughing light,  
For the silence and the gloom;  
Walking down the passage boldly,  
Hearing footsteps echo coldly.

On I hurry, heart in mouth,  
Clasping tight my candle tall;  
Past the antlered heads uncouth,  
Through the vastness of the hall,

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

By that door whence, with a pounce,  
Miss Parker jumped upon me once.

There! at length I reach the landing;  
Fast behind me shuts the door;  
All seems safe to me there standing—  
Listening—trembling—on the floor.  
Yet—suppose beneath the bed  
A wolf lay listening to my tread?

Fearfully my prayers I mutter—  
Shadows like a hearse's plume  
Crawling with each candle splutter  
From the corners, through the room.  
Dancing to my words devout—  
As if they know the light must out!

Taking courage—heart of grace—  
One wild puff, the deed is done,  
A flying leap through pitch-black space  
And then the bed is fairly won.  
Where, head covered up, I cower  
Till the stillest midnight hour.

Midst the stillness of the night,  
See me like a small mouse lying,  
In four-poster, vast and white,  
Paralysed—no hope of sleep,  
Listening for a stealthy creep.

For, until that midnight hour,  
Denser, tenser draws the night  
Round the top of Hafton's tower,  
Round a tiny, trembling wight:  
Then, comes slumber soft at last,  
And the power of ghosts is past.

ON THE TRAIN,  
SIBERIA,  
6/10/12.

# ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

A SONG OF SEEING—A SONG OF PARADISE—TO AN  
ALMOND-TREE ON THE JANICULUM—FOR THOSE AT  
SEA—THE HERRING



# A SONG OF SEEING

*from the "Englishwoman"*

I THOUGHT upon the wonder of the spring  
A day when she was young and everything  
Was shooting into fresh and sappy green.  
    "Alas! It has long been  
    The winter time," I said,  
    And bowed my head  
And with my hand caressed amid the grass  
A daisy, for my heart's a childish lass  
    Loving what's strange and new,  
    The chionodoxa's blue,  
The glistening and reflective celandine,  
But most of all the violet that is fine  
And delicately lidded, with the breath  
Of dewy April that can know no death.  
The scent of all that's young is wrapt in her  
    And when I see the stir  
Of blue-capt stalks along the southern border  
    I know that God doth order  
His joyous mind to manifest the spring,  
Until His thought hath put in everything  
New life, new love, new splendour, new desire,  
And all the world sings "Life! Life! Life!" Like a choir  
    Of birds,  
    Of happy birds that sing,  
    Having no need of words  
    To intersperse  
    Their most melodious verse.

I pondered all this beauty that I mention,  
The living thought of God, and His intention  
Toward earth and me, who am a part of earth,  
For though they tell me that I had my birth  
    Some other where,  
    I do not greatly care  
    If this be true or no.  
    I think it's partly so.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

But I believe that we're all sent to gather  
Some earthly treasure for the Heavenly Father  
Till He recall us from His dewy field  
At evening-time, building a finer bield  
For souls returning mindful of earth's beauty,  
Not naked as they came—a faithful duty  
—Although she's not done all that she intended—  
    Is never barrenly expended,  
    For to her shall accrue  
Some lovely hint of all she meant to do.

Thinking upon these things I came upon  
A wayworn warrior seated on a lawn  
In khaki coat and sickroom suit of sky  
As bright as any scilla that came by  
The soft brown earth in early days of March.  
He sat with down-bent head and made an arch,  
Leaning his brow, his elbow on his knee.  
And when I looked I saw he could not see.

He could not see the flimsy clouds in air  
    Nor the bright sunshine everywhere  
    —Unless it made a uniform shining  
    Against his eyelid's lining—  
He could not see above the daisy-root  
The bright rosette of leaves beneath his boot,  
And for his pleasuring the wallflower lent  
    Only her spicy scent.

I sat me down beside him on the grass  
And told him how the clouds did pass  
This way and that as if they'd lost their bearing  
    Hither and thither faring,  
And how at times the wind came pouff! And blew  
    A little straggly hole right through.  
And how the sun made shadow-clouds, and how  
The cherry looked with spring astride her bough.



## ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

How in the yew-tree was a nest with eggs  
That you could see a-tiptoe on your legs,  
But if you went more cautiously and tried  
To make no noise, you'd get the bird inside  
With eyes like buttons, black and very bright  
And full of fright.

I told him all these things and many more,  
And when I'd done he made me tell them o'er  
Another time, especially the bit  
About the nest, what kind of bird was it?  
And if the eggs were spotted or quite plain?  
And so I told it to him over again.

He sat awhile remembering in pleasure  
And I laid up for treasure  
The light his mind had lit behind his face,  
That speaking-place.  
It was so bright,  
So full of vivid sight  
That presently I asked him what he saw.  
He said: "The winter's thaw."

And afterward I thought upon his look,  
Reading in that clear book  
The great perception of the conscious mind  
That is not ever blind,  
But looks before and after and describes  
The Truth for which a man will give his eyes.  
By this his night has vision and a sense  
That is his recompense,  
The beauty of the little eye of day  
Comes to him in another way,  
And following in the night this guiding star  
He sees things as they are.

# A SONG OF PARADISE

*from the "Westminster Gazette"*

I 'M an auld body noo, an' dune,  
No fit for muckle mair  
Than juist tae sit an' mind the fire  
An' watch the glory there  
Burn doon an' gaither on the ribs  
An' fa' into the pan,  
An' aye I think it's like the spark  
That's in the breist o' man.

The minister comes ben at whiles  
An' talks tae me o' God.  
He's a well-meanin', canty lad,  
An' yet I canna' haud  
Wi' a' he says. There's some that's gane  
(The Lord forgie!) I tell  
Ye I had liefer see again  
Than even God Himsel'.

An' yet there's some I'm sweir tae think  
I'll come across up there!  
My guid-sister was ane o' these  
(In spite o' a' her care!).  
I aye keep hopin' (though it's wrang!),  
If she's got slippin' ben,  
They'll let me oot anither way  
An' doon the stair again!

They say there's mony mansions there  
An' weel I hope it's meant,  
I wadna like tae find masel'  
Shut up wi' a' I've kent!  
I'm no' for harps or golden croons,  
I've tried tae dae my best  
An' syne I've trusted Paradise  
Wad be a place o' rest.

## ISOBEL WYLIE HUTCHISON

Sae whiles at nicht I watch the fire  
An' in the ashes fa'  
I think I see the wee cot hoose  
Where a' the bairns were sma'.  
The water lippin' on the shore,  
The kirk upon the rise—  
I dinna want a mansion, Lord,  
Wi' that for Paradise.

# TO AN ALMOND-TREE ON THE JANICULUM

*from "Lyrics from West Lothian" and "Chambers's Journal"*

I SAW an almond-tree to-day,  
A blaze of flowers against the blue  
Of infinite infinity  
In places where the sky looked through  
Its branches. Such a lovely thing!  
I felt as if I ought to sing.

I felt as if I ought to sing,  
Yet seemed it any song of mine  
Might here profane some sacred thing—  
Some half-seen element divine  
That to those boughs like incense clung,  
As if I sang where God had sung.

## FOR THOSE AT SEA

*from "Lyrics from West Lothian" and the "Westminster Gazette"*

**T**HE shining starfish and the inspired weed  
Shall clamber in your fingers unafraid.  
Your bright astonished eyes shall take their meed  
Of Leviathan and the treasure that is laid  
On the floors of ocean. Ye shall never see  
Through the green arteries of the watery deep  
The tedious growth of earth, yet shall ye be  
Changed in her change, and lapped in Protean sleep  
Your sympathetic hands shall softly move  
With the music of her tides in their ebb and flow.  
Ye shall be part of all that ye did love,  
Mid strange new-fangled dreams lulled to and fro  
In the wake of moons and stars outnumbered,  
Until the unplumbed sea restore her dead.

## THE HERRING

**I**N the deep I slip and roll  
Sliding with the glittering shoal,  
All the superficial sea  
Laughs and tumbles after me.

What care I for things of earth?  
In the deep I had my birth,  
Down upon her sandy dregs,  
One of thirty thousand eggs.

Monstrous, I devour my spawn,  
Or the sand-eel or the prawn,  
All oblivious that I move  
With a moon and tide above.

Do I merely thus express  
Some dead-end of consciousness,  
Outcast of the homing tide  
On whose careless breast I ride?

Or am I the conscious thought  
That a mind in beauty wrought,  
Within whose love the shuddering moon  
Is warm again as summer noon?

# VIOLET JACOB

TAM I' THE KIRK—THE BLIND SHEPHERD





## TAM I' THE KIRK

O H, Jean, my Jean, when the bell ca's the congrega-  
tion  
Owre valley an' hill wi' the ding frae its iron mou',  
When a'body's thochts is set on his ain salvation,  
Mine's set on you.

There's a reid rose lies on the buik o' the Word afore ye  
That was growin' braw on its bush at the keek o' day,  
But the lad that pu'ed yon flower i' the mornin's glory,  
He canna pray.

He canna pray; but there's nane i' the kirk will heed him  
Whaur he sits sae still his lane at the side o' the wa',  
For nane but the reid rose kens what my lassie gied him—  
It an' us twa!

He canna sing for the sang that his ain he'rt raises,  
He canna see for the mist that's afore his een,  
And a voice drouns the hale o' the Psalms and the Para-  
phrases,  
Cryin', "Jean, Jean, Jean!"

# THE BLIND SHEPHERD

THE land is white, an' far awa'  
    Abune are bush an' tree,  
    Nae fit is movin' i' the snaw,  
    On the hills I canna see.  
For the sun may shine an' the darkness fa',  
    But aye it's nicht to me.

I hear the whaup on windy days  
    Cry up among the peat  
Whaur, on the road that speels the braes,  
    I've heard my ain sheep's feet,  
An' the bonnie lambs wi' their canny ways,  
    An' the silly yowes that bleat.

But noo wi' them I maunna be,  
    An' by the fire I bide  
To sit and listen patiently  
    For a fit on the great hillside.  
A fit that'll come to the door for me  
    Doon through the pasture wide.

Maybe I'll hear the baain' flocks  
    Ae nicht when time seems lang,  
An' ken there's a step on the scattered rocks  
    The fleggit sheep amang,  
An' a voice that cries, an' a hand that knocks,  
    To bid me rise an' gang.

Then to the hills I'll lift my een—  
    Nae maitter though they're blind,  
For Ane will treid the stanes between  
    And I will walk behind.  
Till up, far up i' the midnight keen  
    The licht o' Heaven I'll find.

## VIOLET JACOB

An' maybe when I'm up the hill  
An' stand abune the steep,  
I'll turn aince mair to look my fill  
On my ain auld flock o' sheep.  
An' I'll leave them lyin' sae white an' still  
On the quiet braes asleep.

•



# RODERICK WATSON KERR

DESIRE



## DESIRE

O H to flash like a sword clear and bright and naked  
Through the thunderous night, tempered keen;  
Quivering with energy, to leap  
Unchained from solid pillory of sloth  
Like a cascade shivering into radiance  
From its rock; to cleave the pommelling surf  
With sinews taut and straining muscles rippling  
Round the flesh like flow of licking fire;  
Naked, naked, oh, to feel the waters  
Sting and beat against the sides like lances;  
Buffed, but punching back, blow for blow,  
To strike upon the cestused deep, dauntless!  
Naked, naked, oh, in burning list  
To feel the tang of lion claws tingle  
Through the blood, and the hot opposing breath  
Leap upon the face! Oh, resolutely  
In the thronged heat of day, to out-camel  
Camels on the bastinadoing sand!  
Fronting fanged Existence throat to throat,  
Oh, to love the tawny fierce Protagonist,  
And in the gladiatorial fight, to laugh!





# DONALD A. MACKENZIE

SONG—A SUMMER NIGHT—THE ETERNAL PAST—  
EDINBURGH—SOME CRITICS—THE SCOUT (FROM  
“THE FEANS OF KNOCKFARREL”)



## SONG

**P**EEWEE, peewee, crying sweet,  
Crying early, crying late—  
Will your voice be never weary  
Crying for your mate?  
Other hearts than thine are lonely,  
Other hearts must wait.

Peewee, peewee, I'd be flying  
O'er the hills and o'er the sea,  
Till I found the love I long for  
Wheresoe'er he'd be.  
Peewee crying, I'd be flying,  
Could I fly like thee!

## A SUMMER NIGHT

THE silence of the stars serene and strong  
Possessed the listening summer night, until  
Out of the dark west swept with sudden thrill  
A faerie gust that brought an unseen throng  
To fill the wood with music, mirth and song  
And leaf-like trippings light. Then all grew still—  
The blithe throng passed but leaving o'er the hill  
A bright star dancing on. . . . That whole night long  
Sounds still more strange around the hillside rose—  
The stammering of waves, now loud, now low:  
The slumberous murmurs of the star-gemmed sea  
In ebon beauty laid and deep repose,  
Dreaming its dreams all gloomful or aglow  
Of ages past and ages yet to be.

## THE ETERNAL PAST

**L**IKE to the night-cloud's shadow o'er the sea  
Fell the swift thought of death; and then mused I  
On those who in this quiet graveyard lie,  
Until the days long past came back to me.  
How near in such an hour our dead can be!  
We hear them speak, but cannot make reply;  
We can but look and list as they go by,  
While fall Time's deep'ning shadows, silently.

Past, present, death and life all seem to be  
In twilight blended; while that voice of light,  
The evening star, Weird of the western sky,  
Proclaims the dead live on, the living die,  
The lonesome future is like falling night,  
The past a vision of Eternity.

## EDINBURGH

O F old thou wert a patroness of Art,  
Ready with recognition and reward;  
Not shallow, cold and purse-proud, with regard  
For outward show. Thou play'dst a worthier part.  
Thy fame grew not in factory, office, mart,  
But in bare garrets high where, striving hard,  
The scholar, painter, architect and bard  
Thee in young manhood served with head and heart.

Now thou dost seek strange gods! Thy light grows dim,  
Commerce is placed o'er Art; the harp is dumb,  
The pen unhonoured: wealth doth learning shun.  
Wouldst thou raise monuments to merchants grim,  
Bankers, Insurance lords? Wouldst thou become,  
O Modern Athens, Modern Babylon?

## SOME CRITICS

PITY the critic who makes no pretence  
To criticise his week-end pile of books  
That haunt him during golf like restless spooks,  
When, heartily, he sends each author hence!  
His art, alas! is sunk in decadence  
Through haste and overwork. To praise, he looks  
For favoured names; he shoots the rest like rooks  
And sells such game per brace for eighteenpence.

Others are stickit authors whose sad plight  
Breeds jealous wrath; or pert lads lecturing those  
Who, after many years, have learned to write;  
Or hirelings who can wound with blundering ease  
Art-serving bards, and likewise mangle prose  
To wallow in the mire of journalese.

# THE SCOUT

*from "The Feans of Knockfarrel"*

**T**HEN Fewn to Cæilte spake and gave command  
To hasten forth before the Fean band—  
The King of Scouts was he! And, like the deer,  
He sped to find if foemen had come near—  
Fierce, swarthy hillmen, waiting at the fords,  
For combat eager, or red Viking hordes  
From out the Northern Isles. . . . In Alba wide  
No runner could keep pace by Cæilte's side;  
And ere the Feans, following in his path,  
Had wended from the deep and dusky strath,\*  
He swept o'er Clyne and heard the homing owls  
That hoot afar and near in wooded Foulis;  
And he had reached the slopes of fair Rosskeen,  
Ere Fewn by Fyrish came.

The dawn broke green,  
For the high huntsman of the morn had flung  
His mantle o'er his back: stooping he strung  
His silvern bow, then rising, bright and bold,  
He shot his burning arrow of pure gold  
That rent the heart of night.

As far behind  
The Feans followed, Cæilte, like the wind,  
Sped on with feet unwearied o'er the wide  
And airy moor and 'thwart the mountain-side,  
By Delny's shore far-ebbed and wan and brown,  
And through the woods of beauteous Balnagown:  
The roaring streams he vaulted on his spear  
And foaming torrents leapt, as he drew near  
The sandy slopes of Nigg. He climbed and ran  
Till high above Dunskaith he stood to scan  
The outer ocean for the Viking ships,  
Peering below his hand, with panting lips

\* Strathpeffer.



## DONALD A. MACKENZIE

Agape, but wide and empty lay the sea  
Beyond the barrier crags of Cromarty  
To the far skyline sharp and blue and bare,  
For no red pirate ventured yet to dare  
The gloomy hazards of the fitful seas,  
The gusty terrors and the treacheries  
Of fickle April of the changing skies.  
And while he scanned the waves with curious eyes,  
The sea-wind in his nostrils, who had spent  
A long bleak winter in Knockfarrel pent  
Above the snow-wreathed strath and buried wood,  
A sense of freedom tingled in his blood:  
The large life of the ocean heaving wide  
Possessed his heart with gladness and with pride  
And he rejoiced to be alive. Once more  
He heard the drenching waves on that rough shore  
Raking the shingles, while the glistening rocks  
Swung in the gurgling brine their long brown locks  
Of lapping tangle, and the broken ledges  
Poured back the swirling waters o'er their edges;  
And while unheard across the flashing firth,  
As was the hill-wood swayed with windy mirth,  
The billow breaking on the precipice,  
With spout of spray, fell spreading like a fleece.

Sullen and sunken lay the reef, with sleek  
And foaming lips, before the flooded creek  
Deep-bunched with arrowy weed, its green expanse  
Wind-wrinkled and translucent. A bright trance  
Of sun-flung splendour lay athwart the wide  
Blue ocean swept by loops of silvern tide,  
Heavily heaving in a long slow swell.  
A lonely fisher in his coracle  
Came round a headland, lifted on a wave  
That bore him through the shallows to his cave,  
Nor other being he saw.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

The birds that flew  
Clamorous about the cliffs, and diving drew  
Their prey from bounteous waters, on him cast  
Cold, beady eyes of wonder, wheeling past  
And sliding down the wind.

# CHARLES MURRAY

THE WHISTLE—THE TINKER—GIN I WAS GOD



## THE WHISTLE

**H**E cut a sappy sucker from the muckle rodden-tree,  
He trimmed it, an' he wet it, an' he thumped it on  
his knee;  
He never heard the teuchat when the harrow broke her  
eggs,  
He missed the craggit heron nabbin' puddocks in the seggs,  
He forgot to hound the collie at the cattle when they strayed.  
But you should hae seen the whistle that the wee herd  
made!

He wheeped on't at mornin' an' he tweetled on't at nicht,  
He puffed his freckled cheeks until his nose sank oot o'  
sicht,  
The kye were late for milkin' when he piped them up the  
closs,  
The kitlins got his supper syne, an' he was beddit boss;  
But he cared na doit nor docken what they did or thocht or  
said,  
There was comfort in the whistle that the wee herd made.

For lyin' lang o' mornin's he had clawed the caup for weeks,  
But noo he had his bonnet on afore the lave had breeks;  
He was whistlin' to the porridge that were hott'rin' on the  
fire,  
He was whistlin' ower the travise to the baillie in the byre;  
Nae a blackbird nor a mavis, that hae pipin' for their trade,  
Was a marrow for the whistle that the wee herd made.

He played a march to battle. It cam' dirlin' through the  
mist,  
Till the halflin' squared his shou'ders an' made up his mind  
to 'list;  
He tried a spring for wooers, though he wistna what it  
meant,  
But the kitchen-lass was lauchin' an' he thocht she maybe  
kent;

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

He got ream an' buttered bannocks for the lovin' lilt he  
played.

Wasna that a cheery whistle that the wee herd made?

He blew them rants sae lively, schottisches, reels, an' jigs,  
The foalie flang his muckle legs an' capered ower the rigs,  
The grey-tailed futt'rat bobbit oot to hear his ain strath-  
spey,

The bawd cam' loupin' through the corn to "Clean Pease  
Strae,"

The feet o' ilka man an' beast gat youkie when he played—  
Hae ye ever heard o' whistle like the wee herd made?

But the snaw it stopped the herdin' an' the winter brocht  
him dool,

When in spite o' hacks and chilblains he was shod again  
for school;

He couldna sough the Catechis nor pipe the rule o' three,

He was keepit in an' lickit when the ither loons got free;

But he aften played the truant—'twas the only thing he  
played,

For the maister brunt the whistle that the wee herd made!

## THE TINKER

**G**IN I was a sturdy tinker  
Trampin' lang roads an' wide  
An' ye was a beggar hizzie  
Cadgin' the country-side,

The meal-bags a' your fortune,  
A jinglin' wallet mine,  
I wouldna swap for a kingdom  
Ae blink o' my raggit queyn.

The gowd that hings at your lugs, lass,  
I would hammer it for a ring,  
Syne, hey for a tinker's waddin'  
An' the lythe dyke-sides o' Spring.

Oh, whiles we would tak' the turnpike  
An' lauch at the Norlan' win',  
An' whiles we would try the lown roads  
An' the wee hill-tracks that rin

Whaur the blue peat reek is curlin'  
An' the mavis whussles rare,  
We'd follow the airt we fancied  
Wi' nane that we kent to care.

An' ye would get the white siller  
Spaein' the lasses' han's,  
An' I would win the brown siller  
Cloutin' the aul' wives' cans.

Whiles wi' a stroop to souder,  
Girdin' at times a cogue;  
But aye wi' you at my elbuck  
To haud me content, you rogue.

We'd wash in the rinnin' water,  
An' I would lave your feet,  
An' ye would lowse your apron  
An' I would dry them wi't.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

I'd gather yows at gloamin',  
An' ye would blaw the fire  
Till the lilt o' the singin' kettle  
Gart baith forget the tire.

An' blithe my cutty luntin',  
We'd crack about a' we'd seen,  
Wi' mony a twa-han' banter  
Aneth the risin' meen.

Syne in some cosy plantin'  
Wi' fern and heather spread,  
An' the green birks for rafters  
The lift would roof your bed.

An' when your een grew weary,  
Twa stars would tine their licht,  
An' saftly in my oxters  
I'd faul' ye for the nicht.

Nae cry frae frichtened mawkin  
Snared in the dewy grass,  
Nor eerie oolet huntin'  
Would wauken you then, my lass.

An' when the mists were liftin',  
An' the reid sun raise to peep,  
Ye would only cuddle the closer,  
An' lauch to me in your sleep.

Wi' a' the warl' to wander,  
An' the fine things yet to see,  
Will you kilt your coats an' follow  
The lang, lang road wi' me?

The open lift an' laughter,  
Is there onything mair you lack?  
*A wee heid in the bundle*  
*That shouds upon my back.*



## GIN I WAS GOD

**G**IN I was God, sittin' up there abeen,  
Weariet nae doot noo a' my darg was deen,  
Deaved wi' the harps an' hymns oonendin' ringin',  
Tired o' the flockin' angels hairse wi' singin',  
To some clood-edge I'd daunder furth an', feth,  
Look ower an' watch hoo things were gyaun aneth.  
Syne, gin I saw hoo men I'd made mysel'  
Had startit in to pooshan, sheet and fell,  
To reive an' rape, an' fairly mak' a hell  
O' my braw birlin' Earth—a hale week's wark—  
I'd cast my coat again, rowe up my sark,  
An', or they'd time to lench a second ark,  
Tak' back my word an' sen' anither spate,  
Droon oot the hale hypothec, dicht the sklata,  
Own my mistak', an', aince I'd cleared the brod,  
Start a'thing owre again, gin I was God.



# WILL H. OGILVIE

THE RAIDERS—MIST ON THE MOOR—WATER-IN-THE-  
WOOD—HEATHER



## THE RAIDERS

**L**AST night a Wind from Lammermoor came roaring  
up the glen  
With the tramp of trooping horses and the laugh of  
reckless men  
And struck a mailed hand on the gate and cried in rebel  
glee:  
"Come forth. Come forth, my Borderer, and ride the  
March with me!"

I said, "Oh! Wind of Lammermoor, the night's too dark to  
ride,  
And all the men that fill the glen are ghosts of men that  
died!  
The floods are down in Bowmont Burn, the moss is fetlock-  
deep;  
Go back, wild Wind of Lammermoor, to Lauderdale—and  
sleep!"

Out spoke the Wind of Lammermoor, "We know the road  
right well,  
The road that runs by Kale and Jed across the Carter Fell.  
There is no man of all the men in this grey troop of mine  
But blind might ride the Borderside from Teviothead to  
Tyne!"

The horses fretted on their bits and pawed the flints to fire,  
The riders swung them to the South full-faced to their  
desire;  
"Come!" said the Wind from Lammermoor, and spoke full  
scornfully,  
"Have ye no pride to mount and ride your fathers' road  
with me?"

A roan horse to the gate they led, foam-flecked and tra-  
velled far,  
A snorting roan that tossed his head and flashed his fore-  
head star.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

There came a sound of clashing steel and hoof-tramp up  
the glen;

. . . And two by two we cantered through, a troop of  
ghostly men!

. . . . .

I know not if the farms we fired are burned to ashes yet!

I know not if the stirks grew tired before the stars were set!

I only know that late last night when Northern winds blew  
free,

A troop of men rode up the glen and brought a horse for  
me!

## MIST ON THE MOOR

COOL and scented and sweet  
The mist ran over the moor,  
A witch upon light, white feet,  
Subtle and swift and sure.

Laughing, she lifted her cloak  
At the dawn-wind's word, and lo!  
The heath on the hillside woke  
And burned with a wine-red glow.

Running, she raised her arm,  
And under the curve of her breast  
Was the wild thyme's purple charm  
And the blue-bell's blue confessed.

She waved her silver wand  
As the wind made play on the wold,  
And here and there was a frond  
Of the bracken suddenly gold.

Silver-sandalled and crowned,  
Like a Queen to the West she swept,  
But the touch of her foot on the ground  
Was a joy that the moorland kept.

## WATER-IN-THE-WOOD

**M**AID of many moods  
That vary  
'Twixt the first green willow and the snow,  
Water-in-the-Wood's  
The fairy  
Sweetest of the fairies that I know!

Water-in-the-Wood!  
I hear her  
Weaving mid the grasses of her choice  
Melody subdued,  
Yet clearer  
Even than the running river's voice!

Spring!—She's then a witch  
Entrapping  
March to be the mother of a flower.  
Hark, adown the ditch,  
Tap-tapping,  
Goes her wand of wizardry and power!

Summer!—'Neath the wood  
Slow swinging  
Built her by the boughs' new green,  
Water-in-the-Wood  
Runs, singing  
Ballads of the beauty she has seen!

Autumn!—When the red  
Leaves, sailing,  
Scatter in the storm-winds rude,  
Round about their bed  
Goes wailing,  
Sorrowfully, Water-in-the-Wood!

Winter!—When the frost  
Comes setting  
Every blade a-silver in the light,



## WILL H. OGILVIE

With her new gems crossed  
Sits, netting,  
Lazily, her ladyship in white!

Maid of many moods  
That vary  
'Twixt the first green willow and the snow,  
Water-in-the-Wood's  
The fairy  
Sweetest of the fairies that I know!

## HEATHER

**H**IGH above the Highland glen  
Flamed and burned the purple heather—  
Colours never mixed of men,  
Tints no painter put together;

And I guessed that, where I trod,  
Quaffing his Olympian fill,  
Rudely had some reeling god  
Spilt his wine-cup on the hill.

# WILLIAM OGILVIE

STRAUGHT, STRAUGHT'S A REED



## STRAUGHT, STRAUGHT'S A REED

O H, but it was a bonny corpse  
An' straught, straught's a reed.  
Oh, but it was a bonny sight  
To look on't lyin' deid.

Wi' naething stickin' out ava  
Frae the taes to the heid,  
An' a bonny smile about his mou',  
When he was lyin' deid.

The neighbours a' cam' troopin' ben  
To look on't lyin' deid,  
For oh, he was the bonny corpse  
An' straught, straught's a reed.

"We canna thole to look on him  
Straught, straught's a reed,  
We like to think he's livin' yet,  
Though fine we ken he's deid."

But in they gaed, an' out they cam',  
An' mighty proud to tell,  
"It's bonny, bonny as a wean,  
An' awfu' like himsel'."

That night efter the funeral  
The auld wife grat fu' loud.  
She cursed her man, she cursed the will,  
She swore, an' swear she could.

She cursed, she grat, she grat, she cursed,  
Wi' mony unholy name,  
She shocked auld Jockie frae the North  
O' strict religious fame.

She shocked auld Jockie frae the North,  
She cared na hoo she spak',  
She cursed the Lawyer, cursed the Priest,  
She cursed the unholy pack.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

“An’ if I had my man this night  
I’d tear him limb frae limb.  
The siller’s mine, the siller’s mine,  
I wrought for’t weel as him.

“I tell ye gin I was na blind,  
Ay, blind i’ baith my een,  
To see my man o’ business  
To Enbrugh Toon I’d been.

“I warrant ye I’ll get my rights,  
I’ll mak the callant glow’r.  
To Enbrugh Toon I’m gane  
Gin Michaelmas be owre.”

To Enbrugh Toon, to Enbrugh Toon,  
Straught, straught’s a reed,  
To Enbrugh Toon ere Michaelmas  
They’ve ta’en the auld wife deid.

# SIR RONALD ROSS

HESPERUS—SHAKESPEARE, 1916—SONG OF THE  
MOON—SONG OF THE SUN





# HESPERUS

*from "Lyra Modulata"*

**A**H, whither dost thou float, sweet silent star,  
In yonder floods of evening's dying light?  
Before the fanning wings of rising night,  
Methinks thy silvery barque is driven far  
To some lone isle or calmly haven'd shore,  
Where the lorn eye of man can follow thee no more.

How many a one hath watch'd thee even as I,  
And unto thee and thy receding ray  
Pour'd forth his thoughts with many a treasured sigh  
Too sweet and strange for the remorseless day;  
But thou hast gone and left unto his sight  
Too great a host of stars, and yet too black a night.

E'en as I gaze upon thee, thy bright form  
Doth sail away among the cloudy isles  
Around whose shores the sea of sunlight smiles;  
On thee may break no black and boisterous storm  
To turn the tenor of thy calm career;  
As thou wert long ago so now thou dost appear.

Art thou a tear left by the exiled day  
Upon the dusky cheek of drowsy night?  
Or dost thou as a lark carol alway  
Full in the liquid glow of heavenly light?  
Or, bent on discord and angelic wars,  
As some bright spirit tread before the trooping stars?

The disenchanted vapours hide thee fast;  
The watery twilight fades and night comes on;  
One lingering moment more and thou art gone,  
Lost in the rising sea of clouds that cast  
Their inundations o'er the darkening air;  
And wild the night wind wails the lightless world's despair.

## SHAKESPEARE, 1916

*from "The Book of Homage," Oxford, 1916*

NOW when the sinking Sun reeketh with blood,  
And the gore-gushing vapours rent by him  
Rend him and bury him: now the World is dim  
As when great thunders gather for the flood;  
And in the darkness men die where they stood,  
And dying slay, or scatter'd limb from limb  
Cease in a flash where mad-eyed cherubim  
Of Death destroy them in the night and mud:  
When landmarks vanish—murder is become  
A glory—cowardice, conscience—and to lie,  
A law—to govern, but to serve a time:—  
We dying, lifting bloodied eyes and dumb,  
Behold the silver star serene on high,  
That is thy spirit there, O Master Mind sublime.

# SONG OF THE MOON

*from "Psychologies"*

COME all creatures of delight,  
Beauty's brightest in the night.  
I am Beauty, and I bear  
Emeralds in my amber hair,  
And a crystal gemmary  
To adorn earth, air and sea.  
I am watching Wisdom too,  
For, while others dream, I do—  
Light the world to let men know  
Where's the way for them to go.  
I am Love, for I behold  
All things ever and of old;  
Stars with eager eyes, new-born,  
Blind ones wandering forlorn;  
Watch the evening, watch the morn,  
Without envy, without scorn.  
New things may be bright or dull;  
Only old things, beautiful.

Ever changing, aye the same,  
Still I bear my orbèd flame—  
Embers of thick fire won  
From the planet-scarfèd Sun.  
They that utter brightness burn;  
Happier we who bear the urn;  
So, content, I follow him,  
Happier, lovelier, though more dim.

# SONG OF THE SUN

*from "Psychologies"*

**F**ROM the throng'd and thick world under  
I arise with step of thunder.  
Through the mantle of my fire,  
Through my flaming locks of hair,  
Glow the form that all desire,  
But more bright than they can bear;  
For although I make men see,  
None can dare to gaze on me.  
Whether I rise in fire or blood,  
Mortals hail me lord or god.  
Then, before my battling knees,  
Bubbling boil the surging seas,  
And the clouds are writhing brent  
By my fiery chastisement.  
With my right hand held on high,  
I let Life, the Angel, fly;  
With my left, I grip and quell  
Death, the Old Man, dragg'd from hell.

But ye men, who bow so low  
At my gorgeous orient, know  
That for ever in chains I go.  
I am lord, for I am slave;  
Conqueror, because I save;  
Master, for I must obey;  
God, because I burn away.  
Though my lordly planets pace,  
Peers before my sovran face,  
In them every grain of sand  
Governs me with like command.  
So within my empery,  
Only he who serves is free  
And shall win the victory.

# MARY SYMON

THE ECHT-DAY CLOCK—THE SOLDIERS' CAIRN—HAME  
(ST ANDREW'S DAY UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS)



## THE ECHT-DAY CLOCK

WE'VE flitted, lad, we've flitted,  
We've left the auld close mou';  
We're tryin' to be gentry,  
Wi' oor gilt an' ormolu.  
The hoose is fu' o' bravities,  
And a' new-fangled trock,  
But I'd swap them a' the morn  
For my guid auld echt-day clock.

I mind on't in the hoose at hame—  
My granny's but-an'-ben—  
Her owre-croon mutch aside it sat,  
Her specs an' sneeshan pen;  
An' throu' the wee gell winnock aye  
Fu' bonnie mornin' broke,  
As I binnered back the bed door  
To see what 'twas o'clock.

The aumry wi' the cheena cups  
A' spreckled red an' blue,  
The soord that Uncle Willie took  
Bleed-red fae Waterloo.  
Were gran' eneuch: the kist o' drawers  
Was nae a thing to mock;  
But ane an' a', they bouket sma'  
Aside the echt-day clock.

Its canny jow gied throu' the hoose  
Like some laigh-chanted spell.  
It cried, "Ye jaud, ye fuged the school,"  
It speired, "Fa bosied Bell?"  
It grat abeen the coffin-lid,  
It timed the cradle's rock,  
An' the lilt that rang in Eden  
Cam' fae the echt-day clock.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

I'm missin't, losh, I'm missin't;  
The shielin's gane langsyne;  
The braes where ance I wandered  
Nae mair ken tread o' mine.  
A far-aff win' blaws owre them,  
I'm 'my lane 'mong fremmit folk,  
Since my hinmost frien' has left me,  
My guid auld echt-day clock.



## THE SOLDIERS' CAIRN.

GIE me a hill wi' the heather on't,  
An' a red sun drappin' doon,  
Or the mists o' the mornin' risin' saft  
Wi' the reek owre a wee grey toon.  
Gie me a howe by the lang Glen road,  
For it's there 'mang the whin and fern  
(D'ye mind on't, Will? Are ye hearin', Dod?)  
That we're biggin' the Soldiers' Cairn.

Far awa is the Flanders land  
Wi' fremmit France atween,  
But mony a howe o' them baith the day  
Has a hap o' the Gordon green.  
It's them we kent that's lyin' there,  
An' it's nae wi' stane or airn  
But wi' brakin' hearts, an' mem'ries sair,  
That we're biggin' the Soldiers' Cairn.

Doon, laich doon the Dullan sings—  
An' I ken o' an aul' sauch tree,  
Where a wee loon's wahnies hingin' yet  
That's dead in Picardy;  
An' ilka win' fae the Conval's broo  
Bends aye the buss o' earn,  
Where aince he fuddled a name that noo  
I'll read on the Soldiers' Cairn.

Oh! build it fine and build it fair,  
Till it leaps to the moorland sky—  
More, more than death is symbolled there,  
Than tears or triumphs by.  
There's the Dream Divine of a starward way  
Our laggard feet would learn—  
It's a new earth's corner-stone we'd lay  
As we fashion the Soldiers' Cairn.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

Lads in your plaidies lyin' still  
In lands we'll never see,  
This lanely cairn on a hameland hill  
Is a' that oor love can dee;  
An' fine an' braw we'll mak' it a',  
—*But oh, my Bairn, my Bairn,*  
*It's a cradle's croon that'll aye blaw doon*  
*To me fae the Soldiers' Cairn.*

# HAME

(ST ANDREW'S DAY UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS)

GOD bless our land, our Scotland,  
Grey glen an' misty brae,  
The blue heights o' the Coolins,  
The green haughs yont the Spey,  
The weary wastes on Solway,  
Snell winds blaw owre them a'—  
But aye it's Hame, lad,  
Yours an' mine, lad,  
—Shielin' or ha'.

It's Hame, it's Hame for ever,  
Let good or ill betide!  
The croon o' some dear river,  
The blink o' ae braeside.

God bless our land; it's yonder  
Far in the cold North Sea:  
But 'neath the old Saint's glamour  
It's calling you an' me:  
Your feet tread Libyan deserts,  
Mine press the wattle's bloom,  
But to-night we stand together  
Among the broom.

It's Hame, it's Hame for ever,  
Let shore or sea divide!  
The croon o' some dear river,  
The blink o' ae braeside.

God bless our land. We dream o't—  
The days aye brakin' fine  
On the lang, lane glints o' heather  
In the glens we kent langsyne.

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

Ay, we are Reubens, rovers,  
    'Neath mony an alien star,  
But flaunt the blue flag o'er us,  
    Pipe up the "Braes o' Mar,"  
And steppe and nullah vanish,  
    And pomp and pelf and fame—  
It's gloamin'—on a lown hillside,  
    An' lads, . . . We're . . . Hame.

# LEWIS SPENCE

HASCHISH (A FRAGMENT)—THE SHIPS OF SORROW—  
ASHES OF ROSES—I CANNOT GUIDE YOU TO THE  
LIGHT—MOCK HORROR



# HASCHISH

(A FRAGMENT)

I SAW the palaces of Alraschid  
Through the pale windows of a changeful dream  
Glitter as frozen sea-foam; pyramid  
On pyramid of silver marble's gleam,  
Ice roofed with moonlight, and the doors did seem  
Nailed with bright planets that from Heaven had slid  
As meteors; so Allah might have bid  
A scarlet cloud of alchemy Moresque  
Illum'd the casements' spider Arabesque,  
Reddening the rich intaglio,  
Like magic squares of wine and snow,  
In the moony courtyard far below.  
The moon-smit minarets on high  
With amber lamps are dimly dight,  
And fountains in the fairy night  
Singing splash mellifluously.  
The Jinn the midnight fires of magic fan  
And horoscopes are cast in Ispahan;  
Through haunted windows came the rich laments  
Of many soul-assailing instruments.  
So tender, rapt and tense the tune  
I sank down in an instant swoon,  
And rose above the minarets,  
The moony court, the fountain jets.  
The body seemed the rusty sheath  
My sword-like soul had left beneath.

I saw a love-lamp darkly hid  
By a priestess in a pyramid,  
Its ardent rose of flowery light  
Shone like hope in sorrow's night.  
A wind from Eblis clomb the carven stair  
And plunged me in the darkness's despair,  
I heard the rustling of the Pharaoh's flesh

## NORTHERN NUMBERS

Like moving parchment; odours did enmesh  
My senses, as in Persian cities  
Where the rose-conservers' ditties  
Fill the streets with song and fume  
Of attar and mimosa-bloom.  
So did that sweetly-scented horror come,  
Moving along the corridor as dumb  
As darkness; with a shriek I fled  
From the all-too-odorous dead.  
A hand enwrapped in Sinim's spice  
Seized my soul as in a vice,  
And turned my hot heart into ice . . .

. . . . .



## THE SHIPS OF SORROW

COLD sea, whose spirit feels  
Torture of cleaving keels,  
Anguish that never heals,  
Galleons' fret;  
My soul is like to thee  
A tortured thing, O sea,  
The keels sweep over me  
Of keen regret.

See my sad spirit's tide  
Its surface scarified  
Where ships of sorrow ride  
Early and late.  
Caravels fraught with care,  
Galleys of grey despair,  
Keen as the cleaving share  
The prows of hate.

Then there doth rise in me,  
As in thy soul, O sea,  
Anguish and blasphemy,  
Wrath for my woe.  
Tempest within me wakes,  
Storm-spite and thunder shakes;  
Each sail that on me quakes  
I overthrow!

When peaceful morning shines,  
And on the whitening lines  
Of my horizon twines  
Flotsam most fell.  
Then do I smile like thee,  
Ships of my agony  
Lie fathoms under me,  
Drowned—it is well!

## ASHES OF ROSES

ASHES of roses,  
Shadows of song,  
Than life more sweet,  
Than death more strong.

All to the singer  
Life discloses,  
Songs that linger,  
Ashes of roses.

# I CANNOT GUIDE YOU TO THE LIGHT

I CANNOT guide you to the light,  
The fields of day,  
Mine eyes are only for the night  
In which I stray.

The night—the night's familiar fear  
Is in my heart,  
Anguish and I are knit too near  
Ever to part.

## MOCK HORROR

**N**OW sunset fires the crimson-painted glass,  
And casts a blazon on the faded walls,  
On Holofernes in an arras falls,  
Dabbling the severed head and mail of brass  
With gore reflected in a murderous mass,  
O'erstreaming on the Palestinian shawls  
And purple-pranked pavilion, where calls  
Triumphant Judith to the men who pass.

The sunset's blood upon the silken corse  
Shows art supreme o'er nature; never yet  
Was murder beautiful as is this sight.  
The thoughts of art ne'er run a simple course.  
God! but the woman's hands with blood are wet,  
And scarlet is her scimitar of might!

# LAUHLAN MACLEAN WATT

THE TRYST—IN THE HEBRIDES—A WIND FROM THE  
WEST—ISLANDS OF MIST



## THE TRYST

O THE way sometimes is low,  
And the waters dark and deep,  
And I stumble as I go.

But I have a tryst to keep.

It was plighted long ago  
With some who lie asleep.

And though days go dragging slow,  
And the sad hours graveward creep,  
And the world is hush'd with woe,

I neither wail nor weep,  
For they would not have it so,  
And I have a tryst to keep.

## IN THE HEBRIDES

**I** LIVE in a wide house, with stars in its roof-tree.  
When night sinks over me mists are my curtains.  
Lone waters, lapping, encircle my home.

Morn comes there lingeringly—leans o'er the mountains,  
Meshing with silver the unsleeping waves.  
Sometimes a ship sails by, proud in the daybreak.

Gathering tangle, or bait for the fishing folk,  
Old men and women creep, stooping and rising.  
Like birds from afar floats the laughter of children.

From the quiet creek where through night she lies rocking,  
I push my white boat, and pull away seaward,  
Waiting and listening, watching and dreaming.

Then, in the gloaming, row home through the wonder  
Weft of star-witchery, while past my oar-blades  
Flash the sea-people, all jewel-bespangled.

Lambent and languishing, low o'er the crooning  
And sigh of the waters, the broad moon uprises.  
By glow of my peat-fire I yield to her glamour.

Sagas come seeking me, tugging my heart-strings.  
Sea-folk, far-faring, call from the ghost-land.  
Then Sleep o'erwhelms me, till birds cry at dawn.



## A WIND FROM THE WEST

**T**O-DAY a wind from the West out over the hills  
came blowing—

Ah, how it made dim dreams and memories start!  
And I thought that I smelt in my room the wild thyme  
growing,  
And the scent of the sweet bog-myrtle filled my heart.

Go back, O breath of the hills! Would that we went  
together!

Tell how their lost child fares.  
Whisper among the bracken, and say to the broom and  
the heather  
That still my heart is theirs.

Steal quietly as a dream along the glens that we know,  
The glens that shall fade from me only when I lie dying;  
Sink into peace in the quiet place silent and low  
Where the dust men know not is lying.

Say still my heart is theirs—  
Tell them I never forget—  
That they never are drown'd in my joys nor crush'd in my  
cares,  
That I love them yet.

Yet!—Ah, there's never a heart like them now,  
Nor ever can be again—  
None, living or dying, like those dead hearts that are lying  
Away in the West in the rain.

## ISLANDS OF MIST

**I** HEAR the throbbing of waters that break upon lonely shores,  
And the sigh of the wind in the hills where the heather is growing;  
And old dead faded faces look out from the open doors,  
Far away in the glens, where, ever, in dreams my soul is going.

Far away in the mountains, far at the back of the seas,  
Where the soul goes groping slow, like a blind man feeling  
For the latch that is rust and dust, long since blown over the leas,  
Lost in the love forgotten by loch and sheiling.

It's a song of the dead they're singing, away by the rocks and sand,  
Down by the silent place where the loved are sleeping;  
And the young and the old together are lying like tired ones hand in hand;  
And the only song is the sea's sad song, bitter, alone and weeping.

Far away in the mountains, far where the fathers lie,  
Who shall blame us if ever our hearts must roam,  
Hearing in towns the wash of the waves that break on the shores of Skye—  
Far away, where the West is waiting her children turning home.

# NORTHERN NUMBERS

FIRST SERIES

EDITED BY C. M. GRIEVE

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